Discussing the validity of a guest worker program in the United States

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Abstract

As border and immigration policy is a contentious political and social issue, it is important to consider a wide range of solutions. Actual people are being affected by these policies, but there has yet to be a viable guest worker program presented by policy makers. This paper addresses the possibility of a successful guest worker program by combining evidence gathered through interviews with former migrant workers with analysis of immigration law in the United States since 1965, analysis of guest worker programs in Europe and Canada, and analysis of the effects of the political and economic situation between the US and Mexico. The research indicates that successful implementation would require the allowance of remittances, an extensive public education program, and bilateral agreements between the US and Mexico. Although my research addresses the issue of a program specifically linked to Mexico, the results provide the framework for comprehensive immigration reform in the US.
Introduction

• Gaining perspective on the issue of immigration in the United States

• The border as a contentious issue

• Human consequences of the lack of guest worker policy

• Topics
  – Methodology
  – Literature Review
  – Data
  – Results
  – Conclusions
Methodology

- Field study conducted in Tapalpa, Jalisco, México
  - Questionnaire
    - 27 questions
    - IRB approval
  - 11 informants
    - 6 males
    - 5 females
  - Opinions of migrants about current and proposed policy

Literature Review

- General Migratory Trends
- History of US Migration Law since 1965
- Other countries and migration
- Lessons provided by Guest Worker Programs
- Situation between the US and Mexico
- Prospects for Guest Worker Policy
Data

- Information about the municipality of Tapalpa
- Migratory trends in the area and kinship ties
- Social capital and the development of networks
- Findings concerning the type of work performed by migrants
- Reasons for migration
- Reasons for return
Results: Planning Guest Worker Policy

- Importance of pre-established networks
- Inconclusive numbers but the best data has been for 1997, approximately 324,000 to 440,000 migrants (Hill and Wong, 2005.)
- Bilateral nature of any agreement
  - Facilitates worker returns
- Align worker and employer incentives (Abell, Kuptsch, & Martin, 2006.)
- Effective enforcement of laws by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (Magana, 2003).
- Facilitation of low cost remittance program (Tancredo, 2005.)
- Internet as a recruitment and public education tool (Abell, Kuptsch, & Martin, 2006.)
- Incorporate workers into the service sector
Conclusions

- In order to be viable a guest worker program must...
  - Incorporate lessons from European/Canadian guest worker programs.
  - Not make the mistake of substituting a guest worker program for immigration reform.
  - Create provisions to allow remittances, public education, bilateral cooperation, address realities of migration networks.

- Limitations and necessity for further research
References


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